Ministry of Education
Ontario

Hon. Thomas L. Wells
Minister of Education

Visual Art Facilities

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Visual Arts
Facilities
(Grades 6-13)
1975

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Introduction

It has been said that meaningful learning stimulates attitudes of change and flexibility. This is perhaps more true of a creative field, such as the visual arts, than of most other subject areas. Along with this internal stimulus, two external factors have accelerated the rate of change in visual arts programs in recent years and, as a consequence, in the requirements for visual arts facilities.

The first of these factors was the introduction of a credit system in Ontario secondary schools. Under the former "Reorganized Program" system, visual arts appeared in two main forms. The more general and widespread form was usually referred to as "Option Art" and was taught as a balanced studio experience and art history course. Usually only a small percentage of the school's students were involved, and, as with other option subjects, they seemed a rather select group. A number of schools, for various reasons, did not offer visual arts at all. In the larger urban centres a very few schools operated Vocational Art programs. Some of the Vocational Art and many of the Option Art programs were facilitated by single, multi-purpose art rooms.

The increase in options under the credit system has greatly accelerated the expansion of visual arts programs. More schools are offering visual arts, and many existing programs are expanding in terms of staff and work area. There is a perceptible tendency towards varied courses that can be adapted to student groups and towards flexible facilities that can accommodate a variety of activities, rather than standardized facilities. In some schools the lines between Vocational Art and Fine Art (or Option Art) are no longer distinct.

The second major factor contributing to change was the introduction of larger units of administration — county and district school boards. Creation of these boards has contributed considerably to the consolidation and co-ordination of plants on a more widespread basis, and to the expansion of schools at the Intermediate level. Integrated in the design of most schools are specialized areas for visual arts.

In the introduction or expansion of art facilities in individual schools, there is a general movement away from the single, multi-purpose art-room concept. More consideration is being given to the variety of functions that the area must accommodate, adequate working space, separate storage areas, and more display facilities. Some schools have created new facilities by remodelling former shops or outmoded cafeterias. Many of these ventures have been successful in terms of total space concept and studio-shop atmosphere.

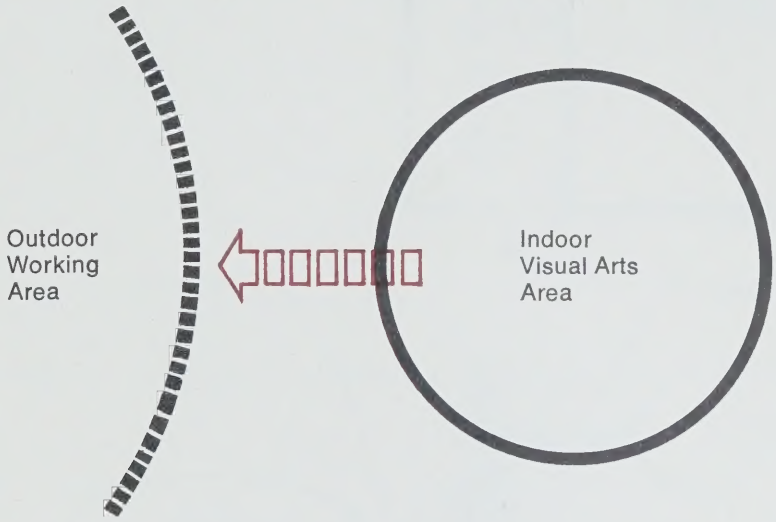
In cases where the school program includes Technological Studies, certain activities of visual arts can be related to the Communication Arts cluster.

This booklet contains general concepts and information useful in the planning of visual arts facilities. In keeping with recent developments and the varying circumstances of individual schools, it presents a variety of plan suggestions.

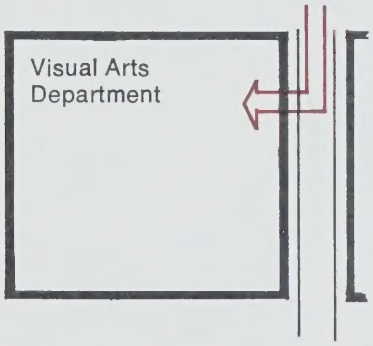
Location

The location of the visual arts facility will depend on the type of school planned. A ground-floor location is desirable for the following reasons:

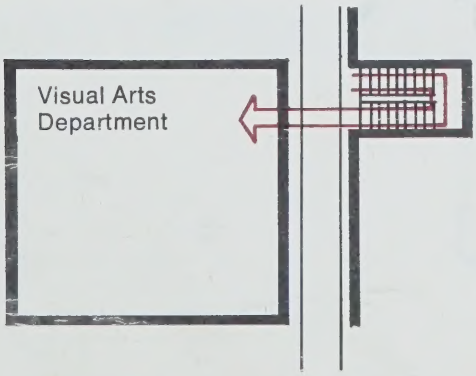
a) access to the outdoors;



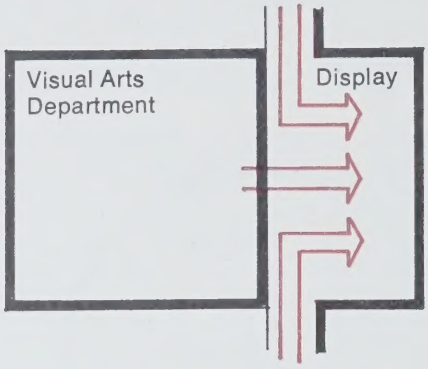
b) easy delivery of materials and supplies;

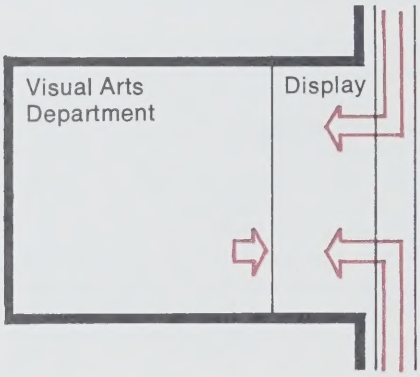


If the visual arts facilities cannot be located on the ground floor, they should have direct access to the main transportation route.

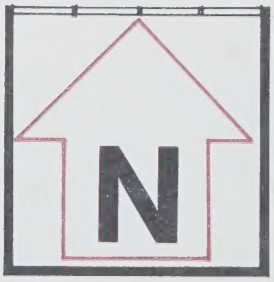


c) access to exhibition areas;

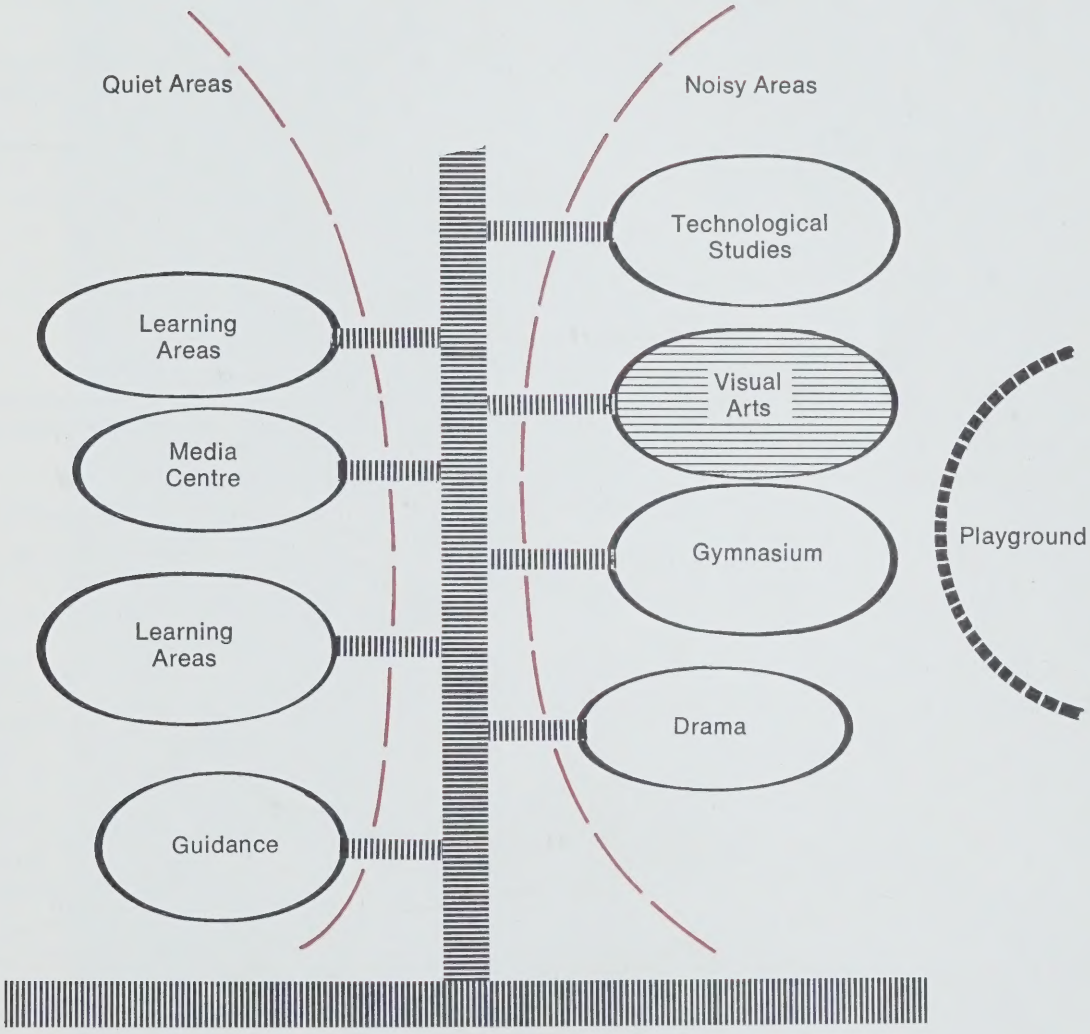




If possible, visual arts rooms should have an abundance of natural light. A northern exposure is preferable.

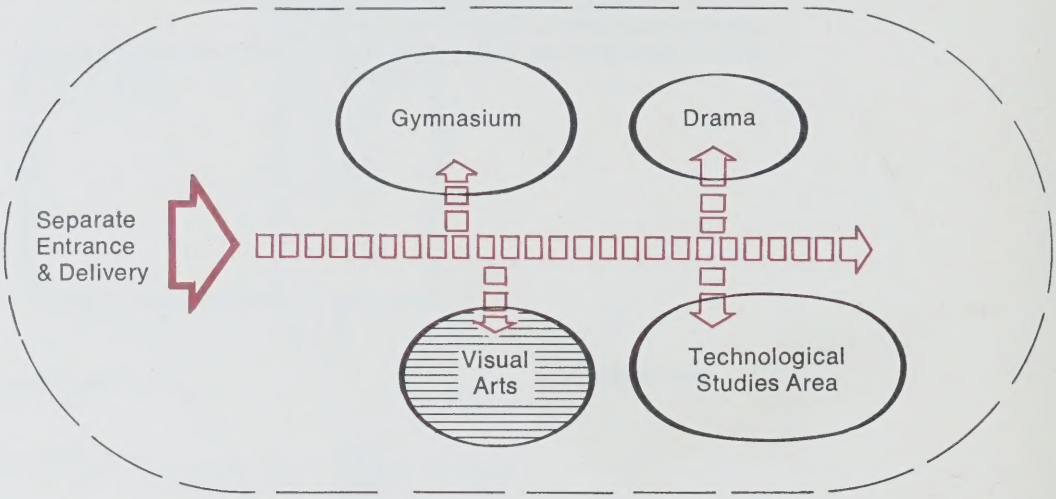


Noise may also be an important factor in determining the location of visual arts facilities. Lively, noisy areas, such as a dramatic arts area, workshops, and gymnasiums, would be best situated adjacent to the visual arts area than to quiet learning areas.



The possibility of co-ordinating some visual arts activities with technological studies areas may make it desirable to group these areas together. Such a complex could act as a locus for adult activities when the rest of the school is closed.

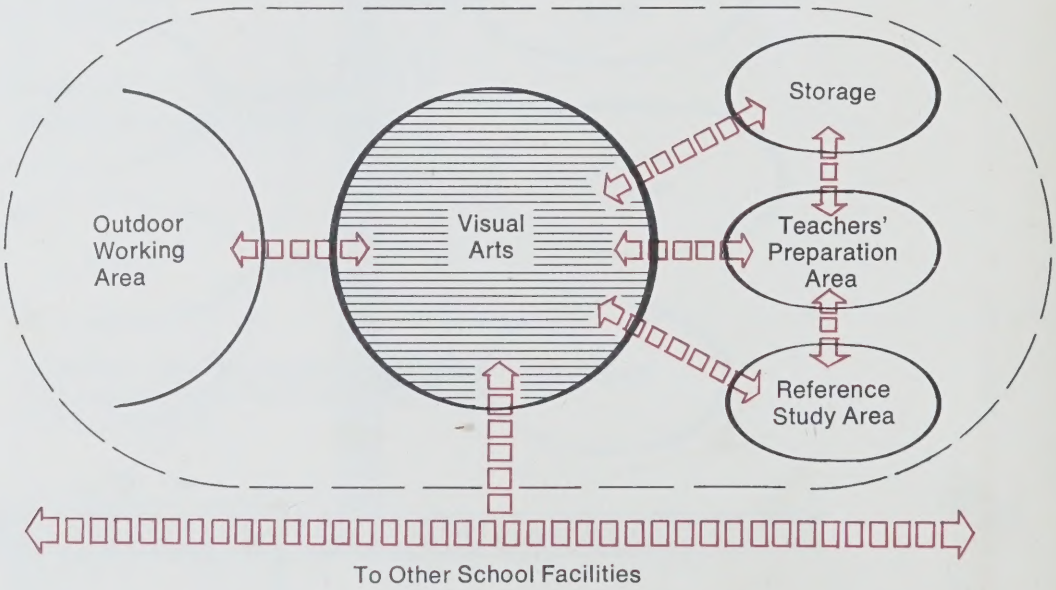
Unit for Adult Activities



Size and relationship of areas

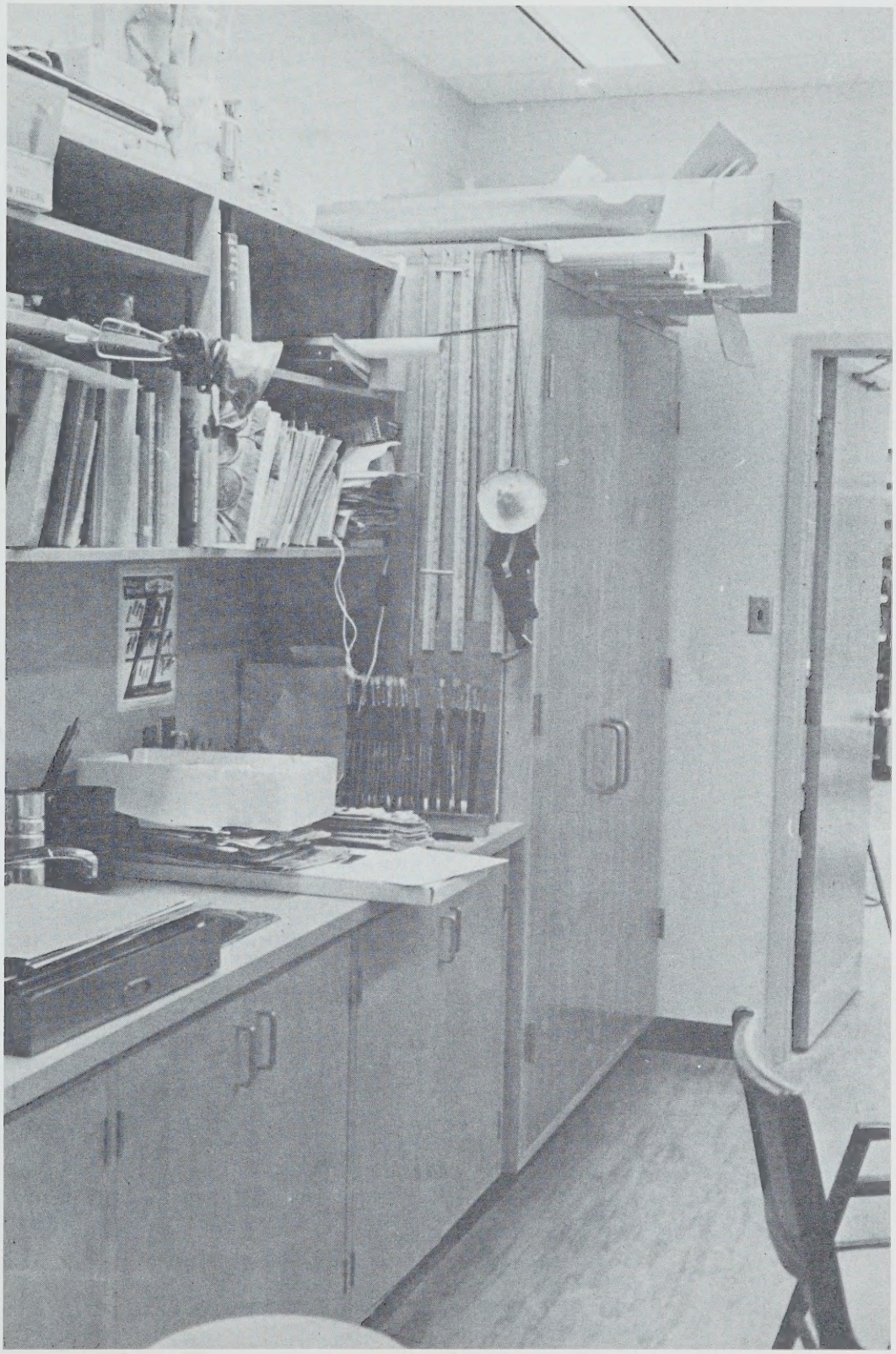
Regular classrooms are inadequate for visual arts activities. Special facilities should be designed to accommodate the nature of these activities and the equipment to be used.

Visual Arts Complex



The size of the facilities allocated to visual arts activities in a school will be affected by student enrolment and the type of visual arts program offered. Special attention should be given to storage; there must be sufficient storage for supplies, equipment, and students' work. Also needed is a teachers' work area, where teachers may plan classes, evaluate students' work, and assemble displays. This area should be adjacent, but separate from, the other visual arts areas.

Teacher's Workroom
Valley Park
Junior High
East York, Ont.



A small part of the visual arts complex should become a study or reference area, with bookshelves, resource materials, and some easy chairs.

When visual arts facilities are located on the ground floor, an outdoor work area, paved and covered and directly connected with the indoor arts area, could be available for sketching, sculpture, photography, and so forth.

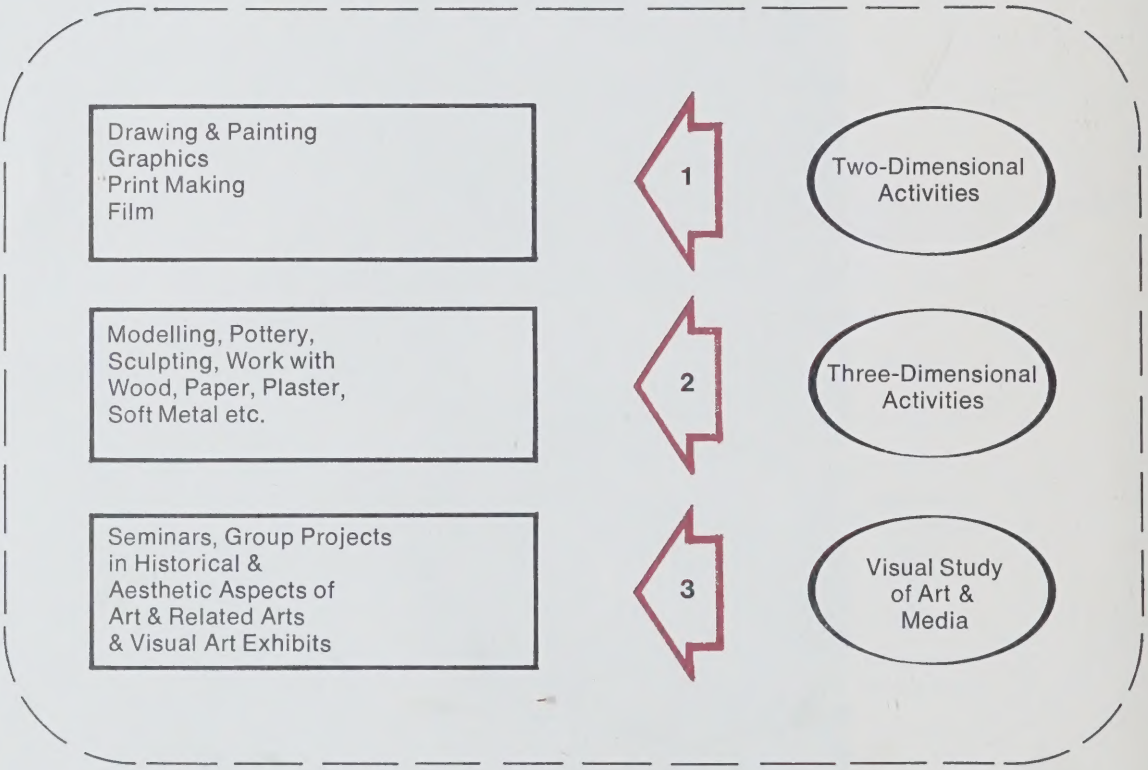
Layout

A square-shaped area has particular advantages for visual arts activities: it makes traffic easier, storage space more accessible, and supervision more efficient. Where necessary, special-activity areas can be separated from other areas by means of screens, displays, and storage units. Otherwise, open planning is desirable; spaces should be related to one another, rather than isolated in a formal arrangement, such as in a row of adjacent rooms.

Activities

There are three general groups of visual arts activities:

1. two-dimensional activities;
2. three-dimensional activities;
3. visual study of art and media.



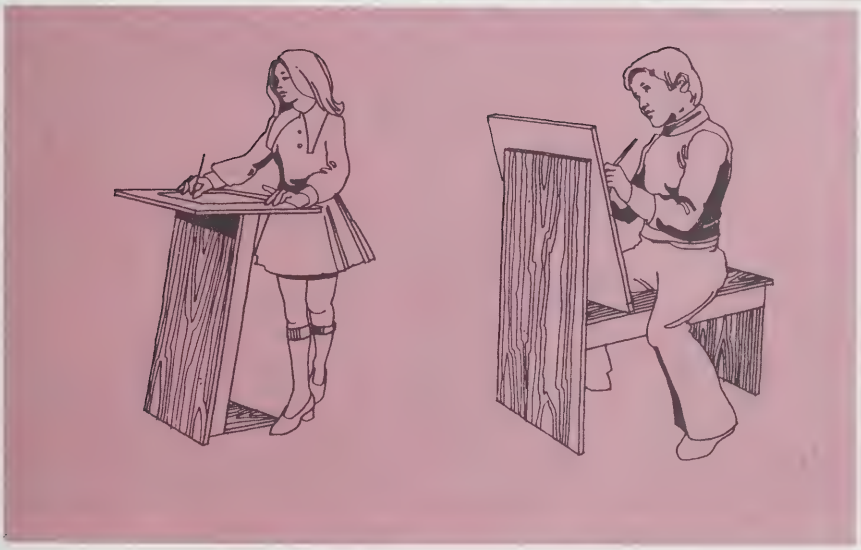
Two-Dimensional Activities

Two-dimensional activities include drawing, painting, print-making, graphics, and other forms of two-dimensional design, including certain crafts and film.

Requirements for drawing and painting

— space for free arrangement of furniture and equipment;

— tables and chairs, easels and donkeys;



— facilities for storing materials, equipment, and work;

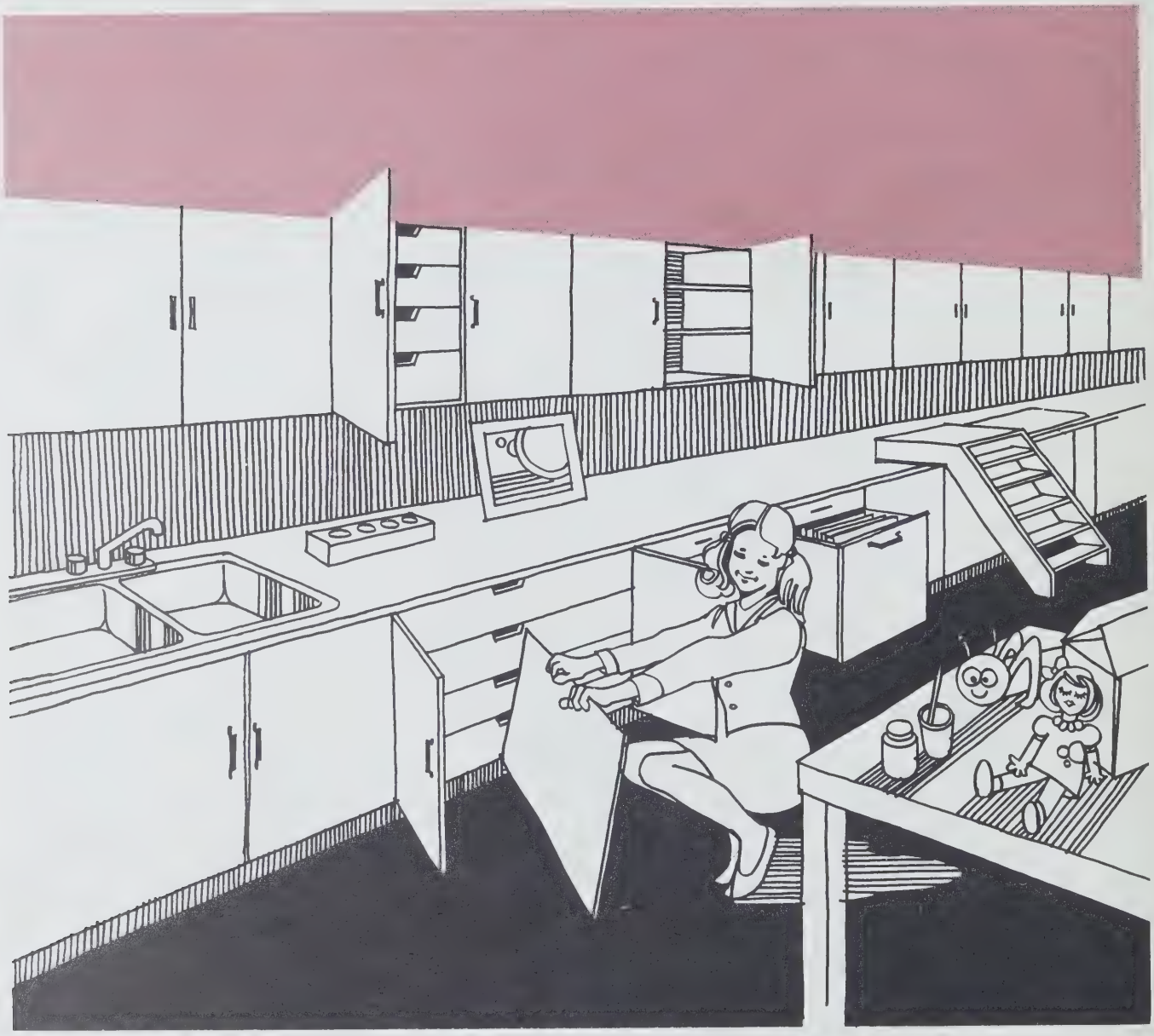
— facilities for display of work and for reference material;

— controlled natural and artificial lighting;

— hot and cold water and electrical outlets;

— in large visual arts departments of secondary schools, changing room for models;

— easy access to the outdoors.



The visual arts area should be flexible enough to accommodate small group projects and individual study as well as large groups or an entire class, especially for audio-visual presentations. Furniture that can be folded or stacked is most suitable. As sunlight is damaging to art supplies, and wall space is needed for shelving, a windowless area should be available for storage. Special facilities are required for storing easels, wet materials, and unfinished work. Sinks with hot and cold water (mixing taps), chalk-boards, and projection screens should also be provided. Windows should be equipped with black-out blinds.

Graphics activities include

— photography;

— photo-copying;

— etching and lithography;

— intaglio and planographic printing in other materials;

— silkscreening.

Requirements for the graphics area

— a firm working surface, preferably large sturdy tables;

— stools;

— a sink, large and acid-proof;

— a large table for printing fabrics: 3′6″ x 7′0″ (106.7 x 213.4 cm) is an ideal size;

— facilities for drying prints;

— cupboard and drawer space;

— good lighting and plenty of elbow room;

— a dark-room.

Print Making
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.

The dark-room should include facilities and equipment for processing films and prints and storage space for photo materials and supplies. A warning light should be installed at the entrance to indicate that the room is in use.

Requirements

— a sink;

— film and print-processing trays;

— a drying area;

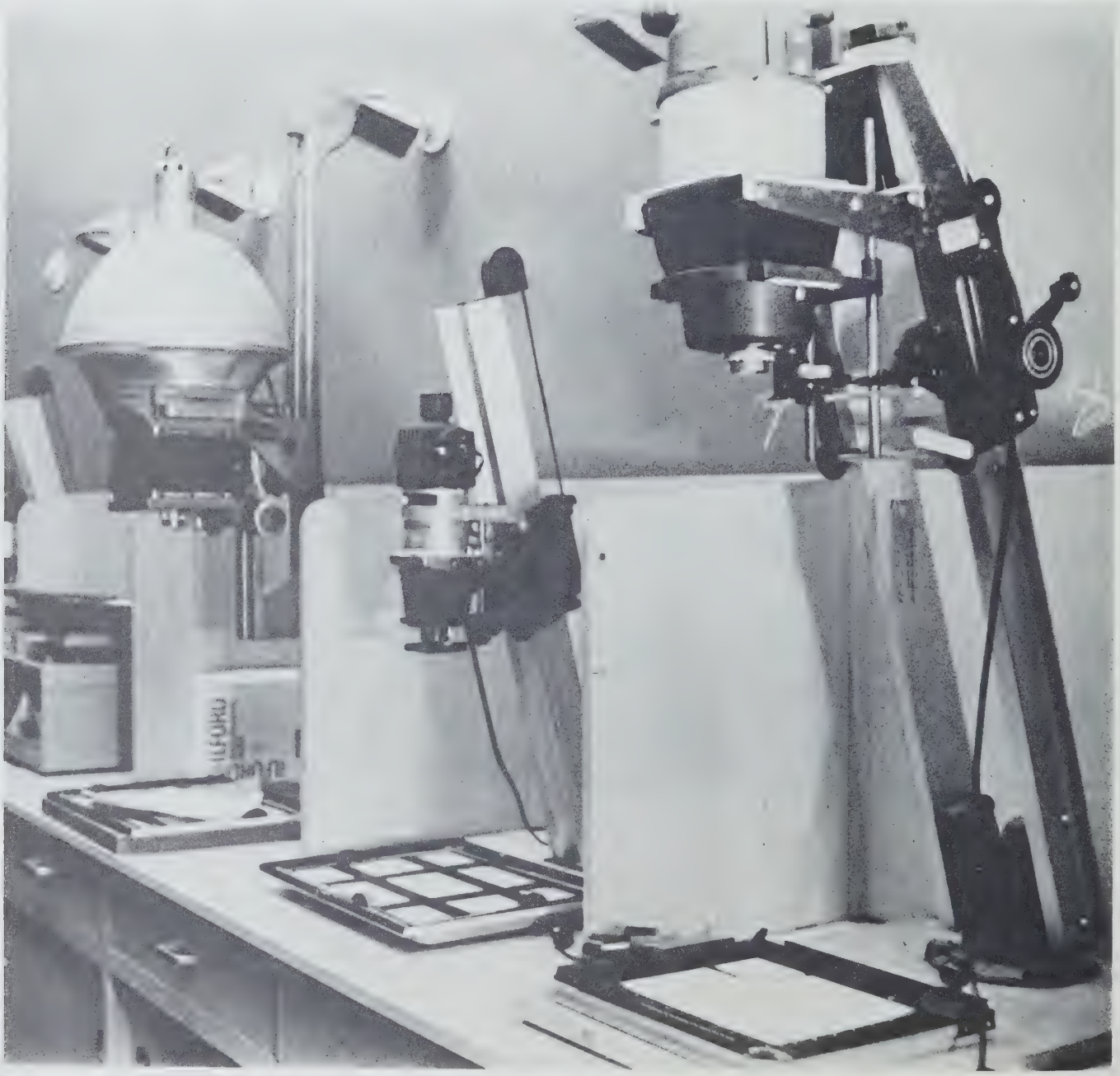
— an enlarger;

— a photo printer;

— a paper cutter.

If possible, a display area for photographs should be provided in the vicinity. (If graphics activities are already included in the Technological Studies program, the graphics area will not be the part of the visual arts complex.)

Dark-Room
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.



The area designed for three-dimensional activities should be enclosed if possible, but provision should be made to allow easy supervision from adjoining areas. The work performed in this area will involve such activities as:

— pottery;

— modelling in clay, plaster, papier-mâché;

— construction and carving in wood, plastics, glass, metal, textile fibres, etc.

Modelling in clay
Pottery
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.

Pottery Wheel
Whiteoak High School
Oakville, Ont.

Modelling in clay
Pottery
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.

Sculpture
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.

Requirements for work with clay and plaster

— bins or movable containers (rustproof and leakproof) for storing bulk materials;

— a wedging bench;

— two large, deep sinks separated from each other and equipped with mixing taps;

— plaster bats and other miscellaneous items;

— heavy tables or benches with working surfaces resistant to solvent and scuffing;

— pottery wheels (a minimum of two);

— moulds for plaster;

— tools and implements;

— an airtight damp cupboard with adjustable, rust-proof wire-mesh shelving or metal trays lined with plaster of Paris.

Some tables and some floor areas should have fire-resistant finishes.

Requirements for decorating and glazing

— benches;

— shelves;

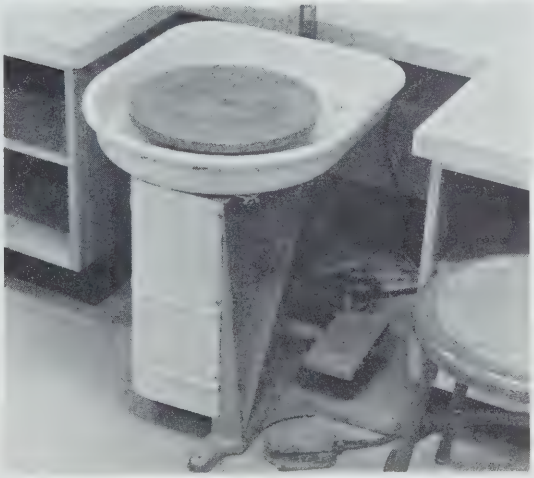
— a sink;

— gas or electric points;

— cupboards.

Storage
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.

Pottery Wheel
Central Technical School
Toronto, Ont.



Requirements for firing

— one 220-volt kiln with firing chamber of about 1,000 cubic inches, thermostatic control and exhaust fan;

— some shelving.

Requirements for other three dimensional activities:

— wood-working table with vises;

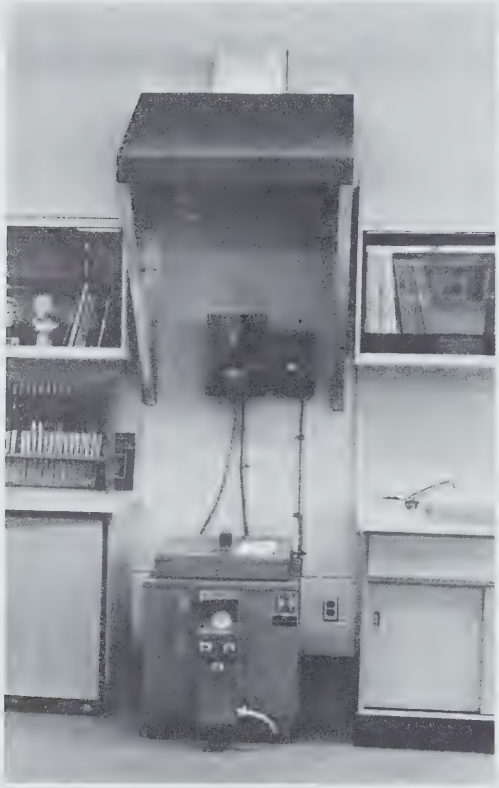
— a portable metal enamelling kiln (110 volts);

— a portable drill press and jig saw;

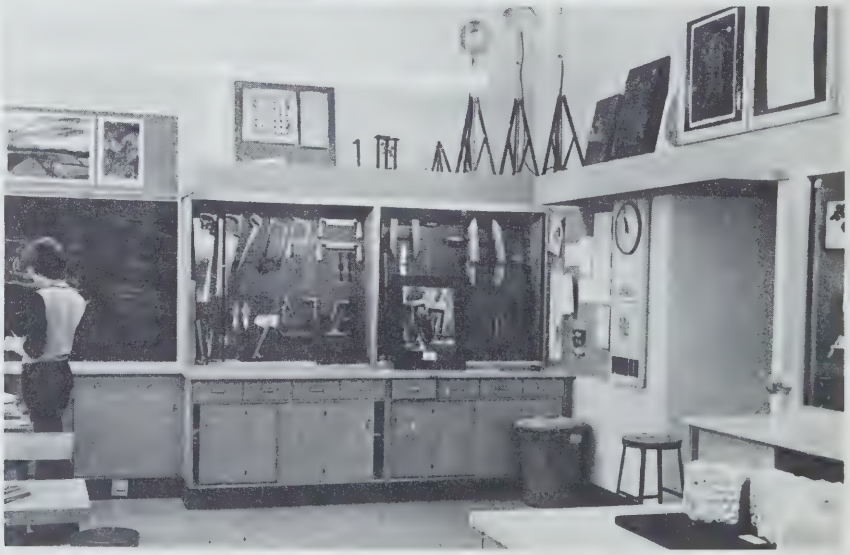
— multi-purpose workshop tools.

The floor in the three-dimensional work area should have a hard and durable surface and should be equipped with a drain and clay trap. As a safety precaution, all electrical units should have a conspicuous pilot light. Some provision should be made in this area for the display of completed work.

Kiln
Delta High School
Hamilton, Ont.



Storage
C. W. Jefferys
Secondary School
North York, Ont.



Storing the tools
Delta High School
Hamilton, Ont.

Visual study comprises seminars and group projects in the historical and aesthetic aspects of art, study of original works of art and related arts, visual aids, and exhibits.

Requirements

Some of the audio-visual equipment needed for any study in the visual arts includes:

— projection screens;

— overhead projectors;

— slide viewers;

— chalkboards;

— blackout facilities.

Other equipment such as motion-picture projectors, tape recorders, record players, and television receivers can be shared with the rest of the school.

Audio-Visual Equipment
C. W. Jefferys
Secondary School
North York, Ont.

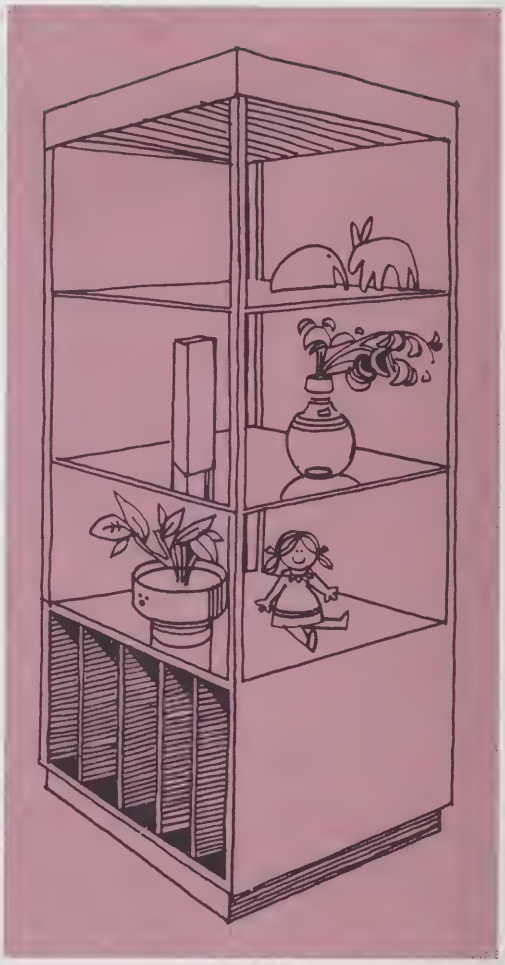
Display Facilities

Display facilities for students' work should be provided in the visual arts complex and throughout the entire school.

Some walls should be designed as display surfaces and covered with sheet cork or vinyl. This kind of finish is attractive yet suitable for a wide variety of fastening devices. Shelving of varying widths should be provided and should be adjustable for use in various positions (horizontal, sloping, etc.).
Screens and panels may be fixed along the walls or used as independent surfaces.

The ceiling can also be used for certain kinds of display (e.g. hanging objects). Mobile units may be used not only for storing and drying art work, but also for displaying it.

Display cases with glass shelves and concealed lighting are particularly suitable. They are used to full advantage when they are placed in an open area (e.g., between the visual arts area and the corridor), where they may be viewed from all sides. The potential of the school lobby for display purposes should not be overlooked.



Storage Facilities

The equipment and materials used in visual arts require specific storage facilities.

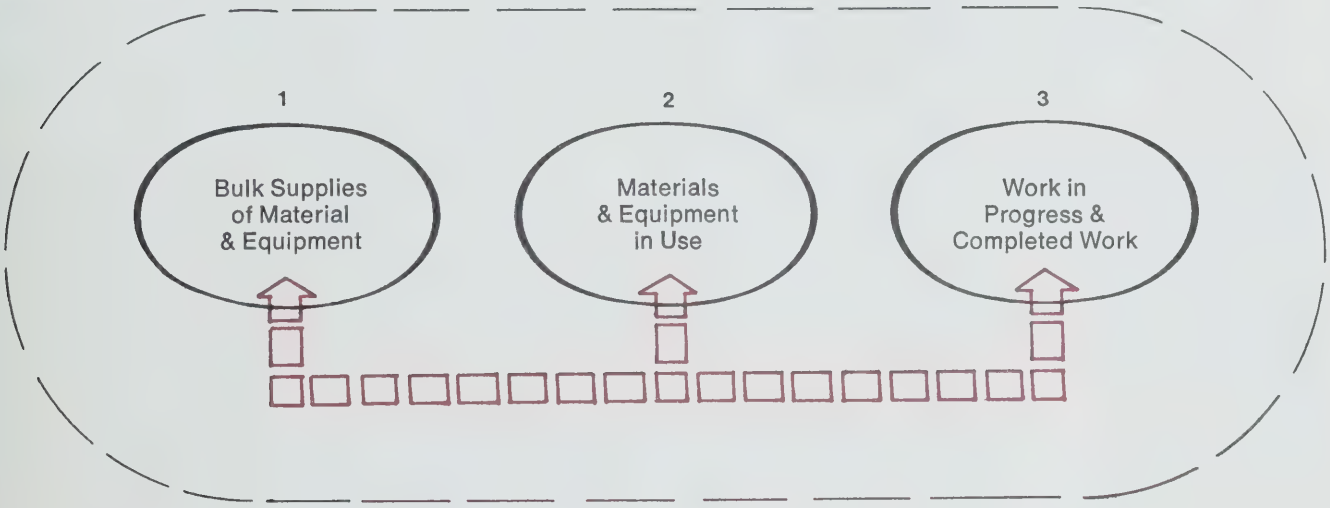
Three types of facilities are needed:

— an area for storing bulk supplies of materials and equipment;

— an area for storing materials and equipment in current use;

— an area for storing students' work (including work in progress and completed work).

Storage Facilities



Some table-height units should be planned in such a way that they can be wheeled as complete work units into any part of the art room. They may be stored singly against walls in the same way as permanent cabinets, or grouped more closely to increase floor space. The lower movable storage units should be placed on casters that lock, so they can be stored under the tables. All shelves in storage areas should be adjustable. Some shelves should be designed for storing a large quantity of small articles neatly and conveniently so that they may be easily available to students.

As a rule, all counters and tables should have storage space beneath them. The tops of counters or cabinets used as work areas should have appropriate finishes. In planning storage facilities for students' work, it is important to remember that some of the work in progress may be wet when stored. Therefore, the area for storing such work must be suitably designed, to ensure that dampness will not rust or warp shelves, tables, or counters. Also, this area must be well ventilated to facilitate drying. Aluminum or plastic trays that slide into grooved racks are recommended. Open racks at the top of shelves or cabinets are useful for storing objects of varying heights. Provision should also be made for storing vertically or horizontally paintings of various sizes. Some locked storage units may be required for tools or expensive materials. The storage area for students' portfolios should be equipped with adjustable vertical or horizontal shelves and located close to the entrance door of the visual arts room.

Storage Area
C. W. Jefferys
Secondary School
North York, Ont.

Storage Area
C. W. Jefferys
Secondary School
North York, Ont.

Electrical

Outlets for 110-volt service should be in sufficient quantity and well distributed. They should not interfere with display surfaces. Some duplex outlets, located about 40 inches (101.6 cm) above floor level, are needed for electrical equipment. A few watertight 110-volt outlet boxes may be installed at floor level in the central area of the room so that equipment may be used without dangerous extension cords. Kilns should be on separate circuits, controlled by individually locked switches or from a central switch panel with pilot light, equipped with a door that can be locked.

Water

Both hot and cold running water are needed for all art work and for general clean-up. Acid-resistant sinks equipped with mixing spouts should be provided so that several students may use them at the same time. They should be well distributed in the art area and easily accessible to avoid unnecessary congestion. Placing sinks in different parts of the room allows groups of students to work independently. Sinks that project into the room at right angles to the wall permit students to work on two or three sides. Where the program includes clay work, the sinks should be equipped with clay traps.

Finishes

Flooring

The floor should be easy to clean and of a warm-hued colour with a low reflection factor. It should be resistant to all materials used in art activities. A cement floor, properly finished, can be very useful in secondary schools. In some areas carpeting can be used, especially in classrooms for children of the lower grades, who like to work on the floor.

Walls

Wall surfaces will be used mostly as display areas and should be designed with this function in mind. Because a wide variety of activities will take place in one large area, walls should be acoustically treated. Such materials as sheet cork and vinyl are suitable for display and, at the same time, absorb sound.

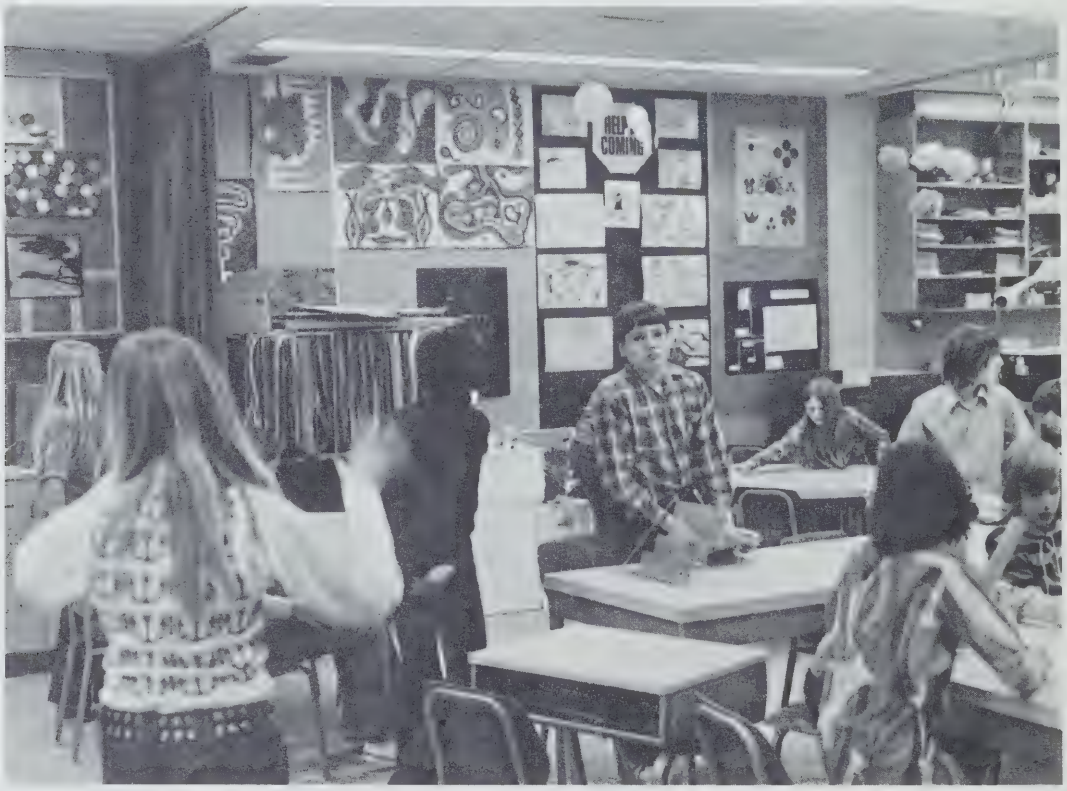
Ceiling

The ceiling should be treated to reflect light and absorb sound. Acoustic tiles or panels are recommended. Possible use of the ceiling as a display area should be considered.

Colour

The selection of decorating colours for visual arts facilities should be based on two criteria: aesthetics and illumination. Colours should function as a background for exhibits and should also reflect light. Soft, neutral colours of medium strength are most appropriate.

Display Area
Valley Park
Junior High
East York, Ont.



Flexibility

To ensure greater flexibility, provision should be made for easy and economic rearrangement of the art room. Equipment should be easy to move and should allow quick and convenient relocation to meet the requirements of changing learning situations. Folding partitions may be useful when temporary enclosures are needed. Chalkboards and blackboards may be movable and become space dividers. Storage units that are not fixed can contribute to the flexible arrangement of work areas.

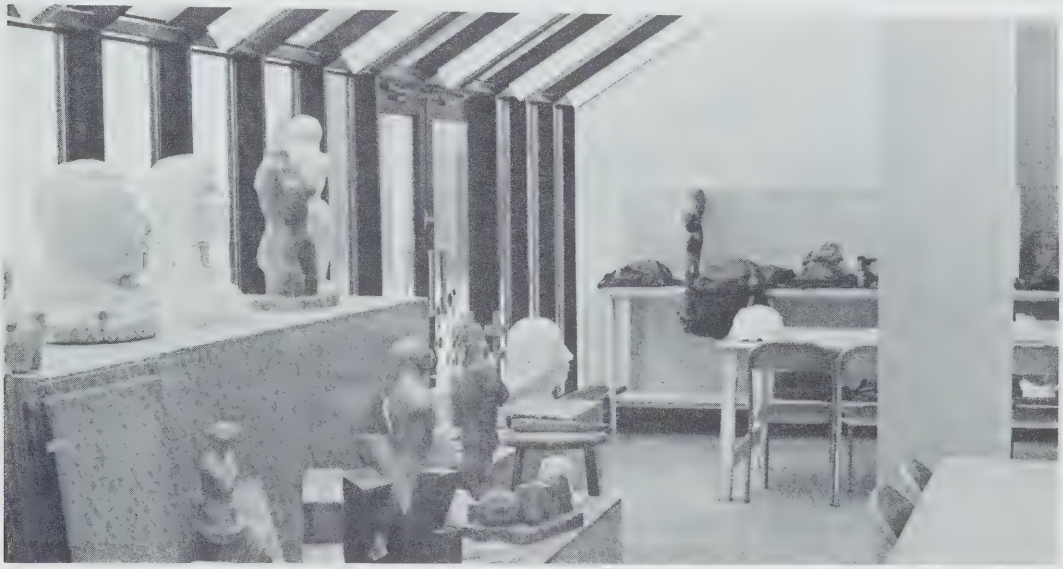
Environmental Conditions

Lighting

General illumination should be planned in such a way as to avoid sharp contrast of light and shade. Lighting that approximates daylight will facilitate accuracy in colour work; light from conventional classroom windows is not always adequate. Skylights offer the best solution and also allow more wall space for storage and display, but for many reasons it is seldom possible to construct them.

When artificial lighting is used, it should be as close as possible to natural light. Fluorescent lighting with warm white tubes and diffusers are the most satisfactory. Light should be evenly distributed and all sources of glare should be avoided. Additional light is necessary for lighting special equipment. Blinds and shades in the windows are of great importance if the exposure is other than northern.

Skylight
C. W. Jeffry's
Sec. School
North York, Ont.



Ventilation

Sufficient ventilation is of great importance; eight to ten air changes per hour are desirable.

Temperature

It is desirable that the temperature in the facility be maintained at about 75°F (24°C) in summer and 72°F (22°C) in winter.

Humidity

A relative humidity of 45 to 50 per cent in summer and about 30 per cent in winter is desirable.

Acoustics

Open planning and the possibility of interference between activities carried on in the same area make acoustical treatment of walls and ceiling necessary.

Safety

The kind of equipment and materials used in visual arts necessitates great caution with regard to fire hazards.

Metal containers should be provided for storing tubes and cans of paint, paint thinner, and cleaning fluids. Cleaning rags are a prime fire risk and should be placed in fire-proof containers and kept separate from waste paper. Paper and scraps should be stored in special drawers and bins.

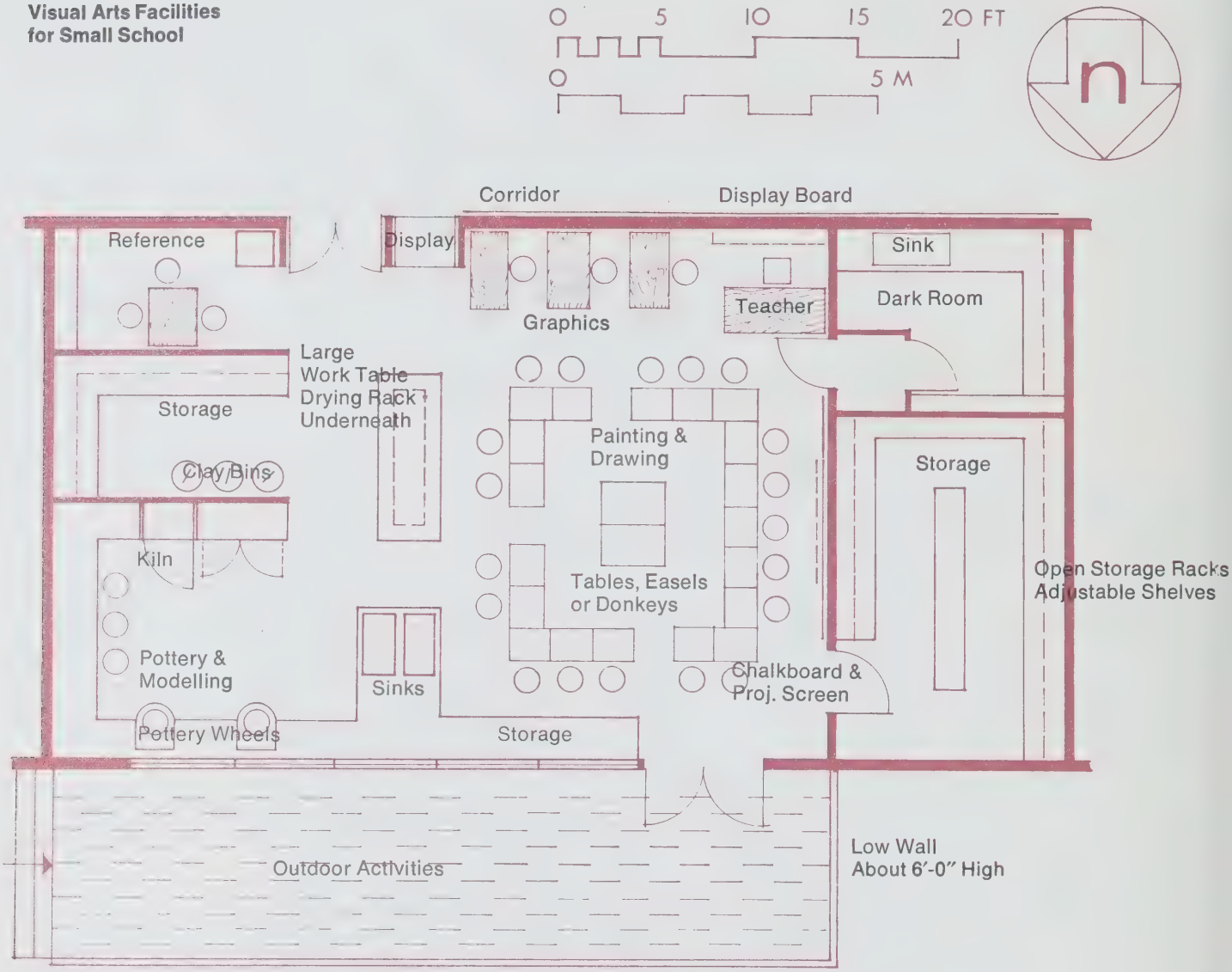
All electrical units should show a pilot light when in use. The master electrical control should be cut off when not in use.

Partitions around kilns or other equipment of this type should be insulated with an asbestos covering.

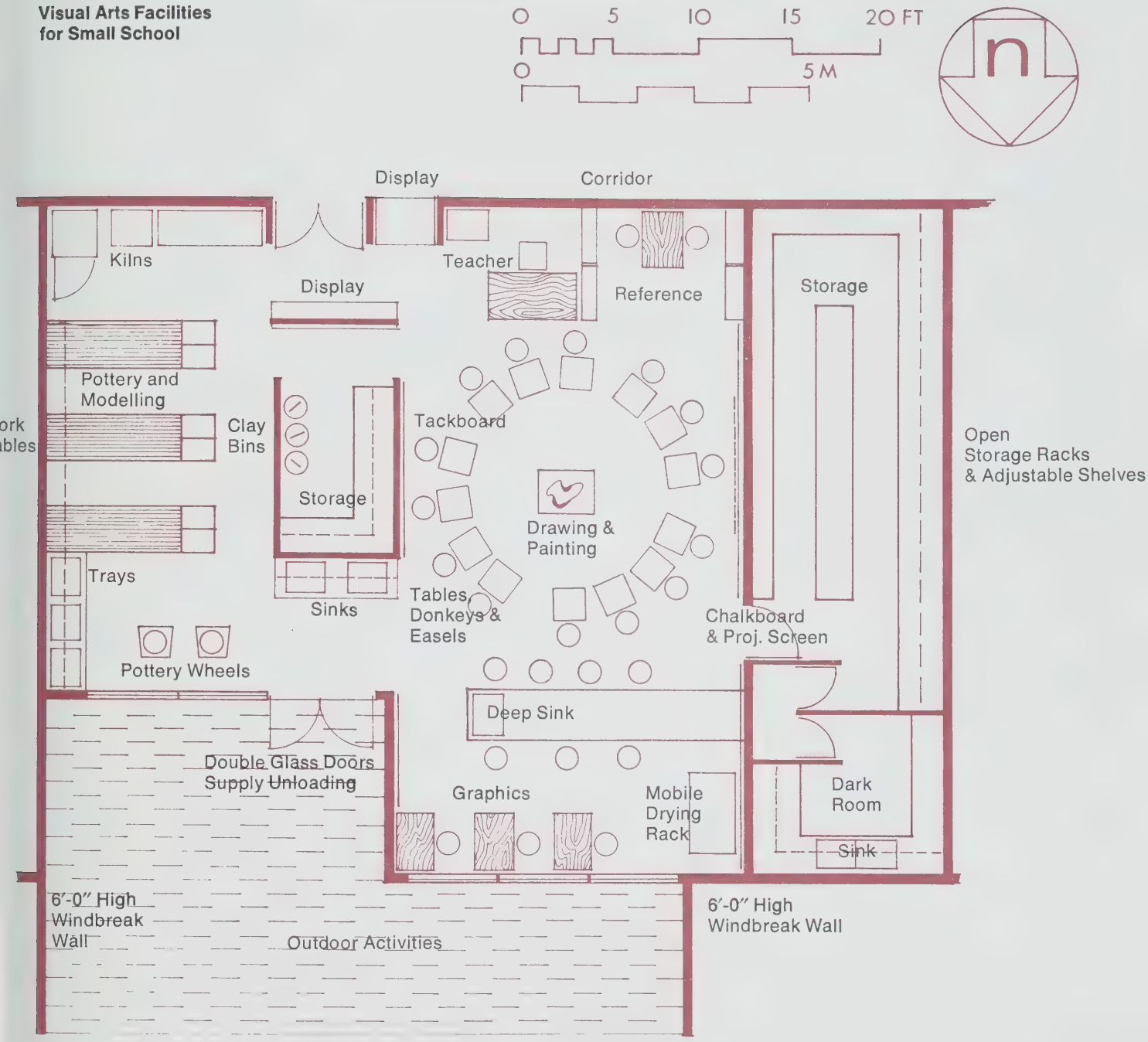
Where indicated by the activity, finishes of counters, tables, and floor areas should be fire-resistant.

Fire extinguishers should be provided for this area.

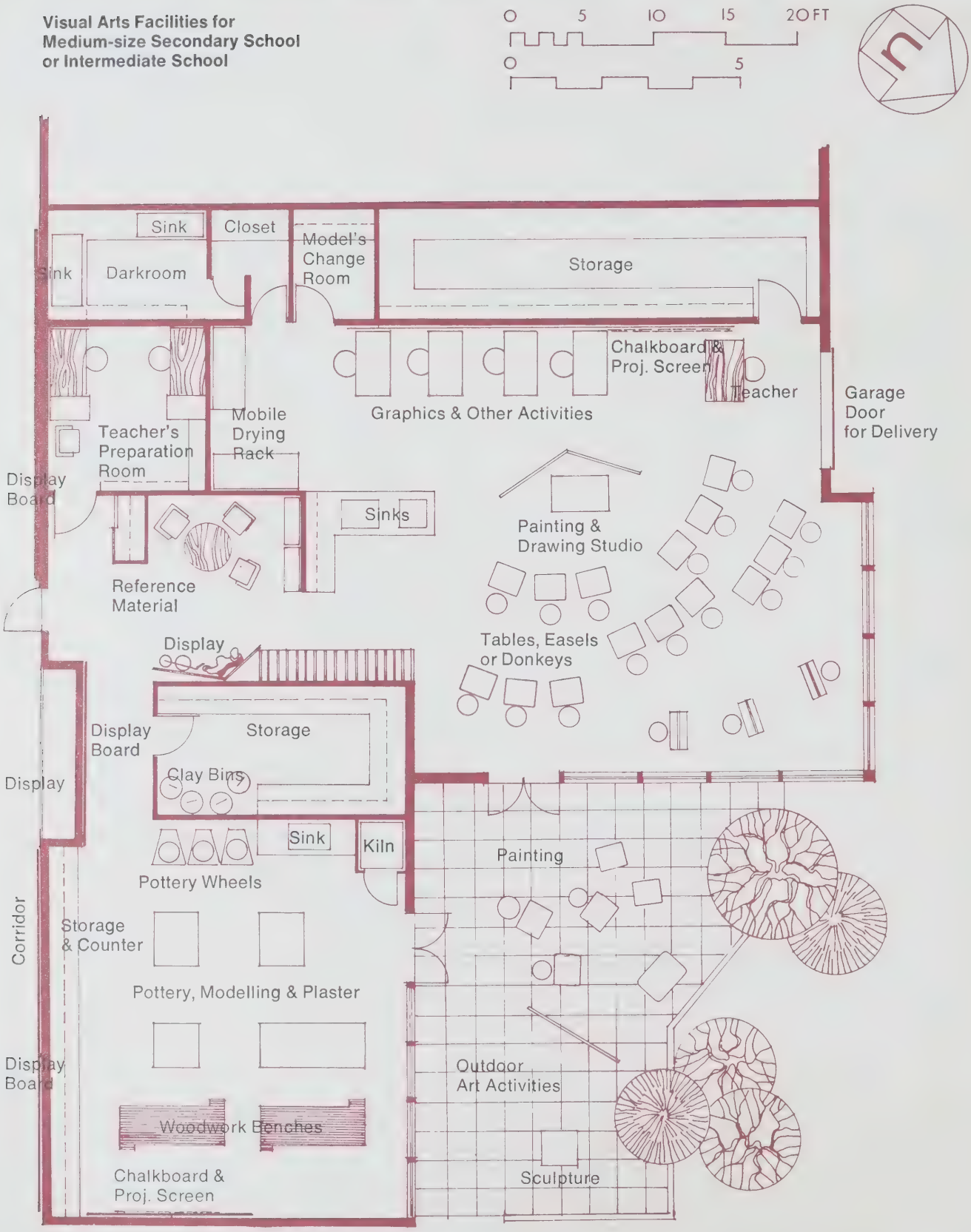
Visual Arts Facilities for Small School



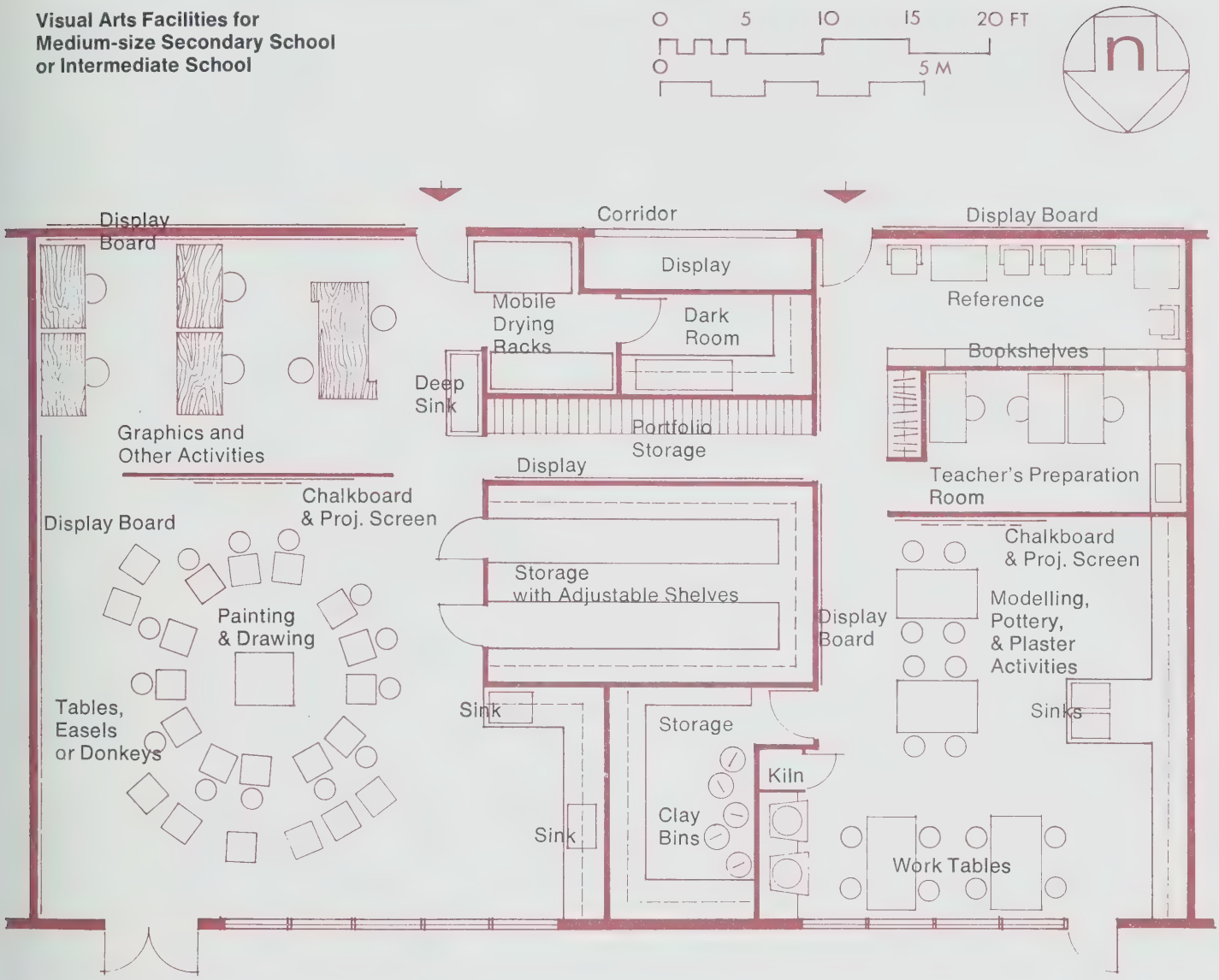
Visual Arts Facilities for Small School



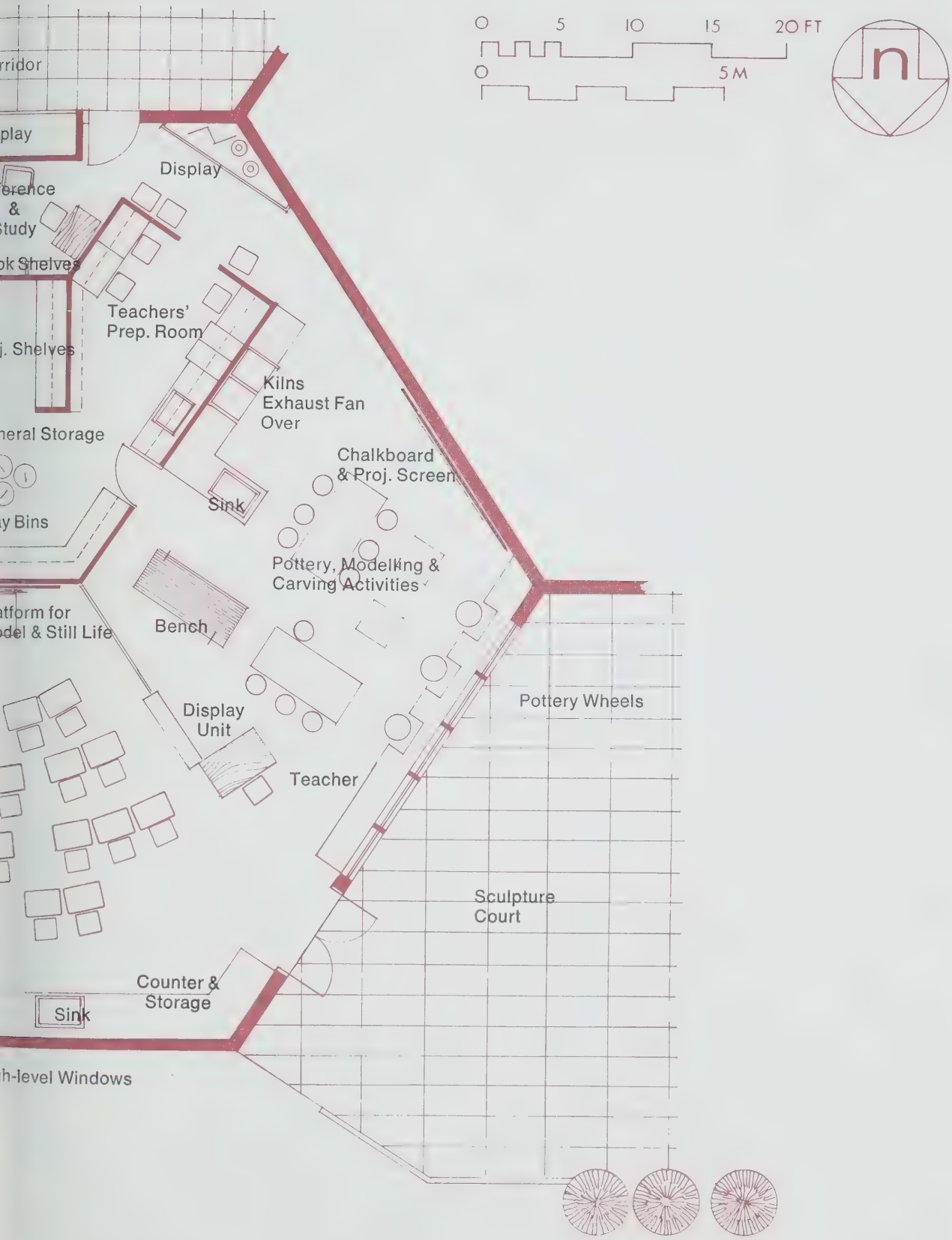
Visual Arts Facilities for Medium-size Secondary School or Intermediate School



Visual Arts Facilities for Medium-size Secondary School or Intermediate School



Double Visual Arts Facilities for Intermediate Schools or for Smaller Secondary Schools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Display
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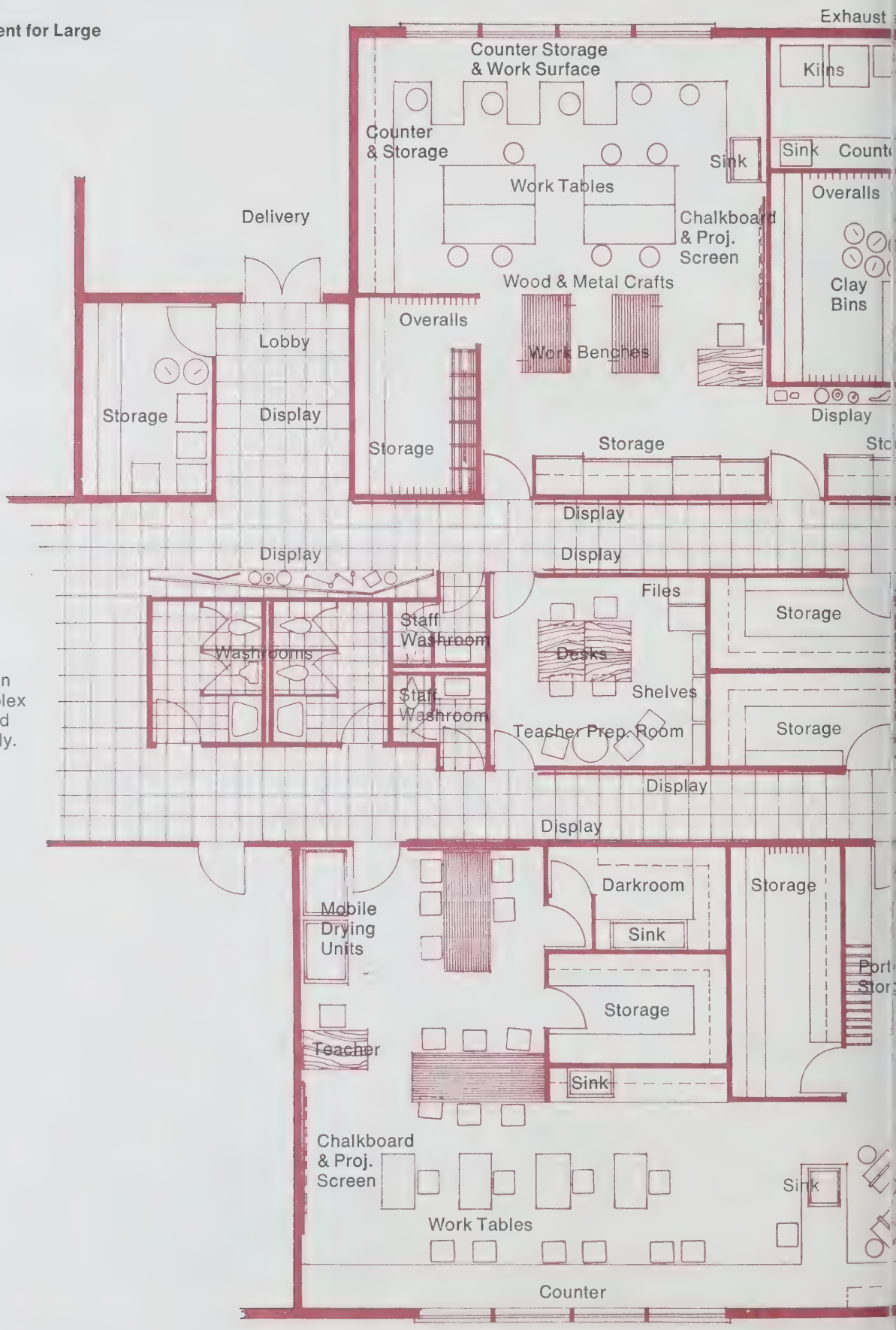
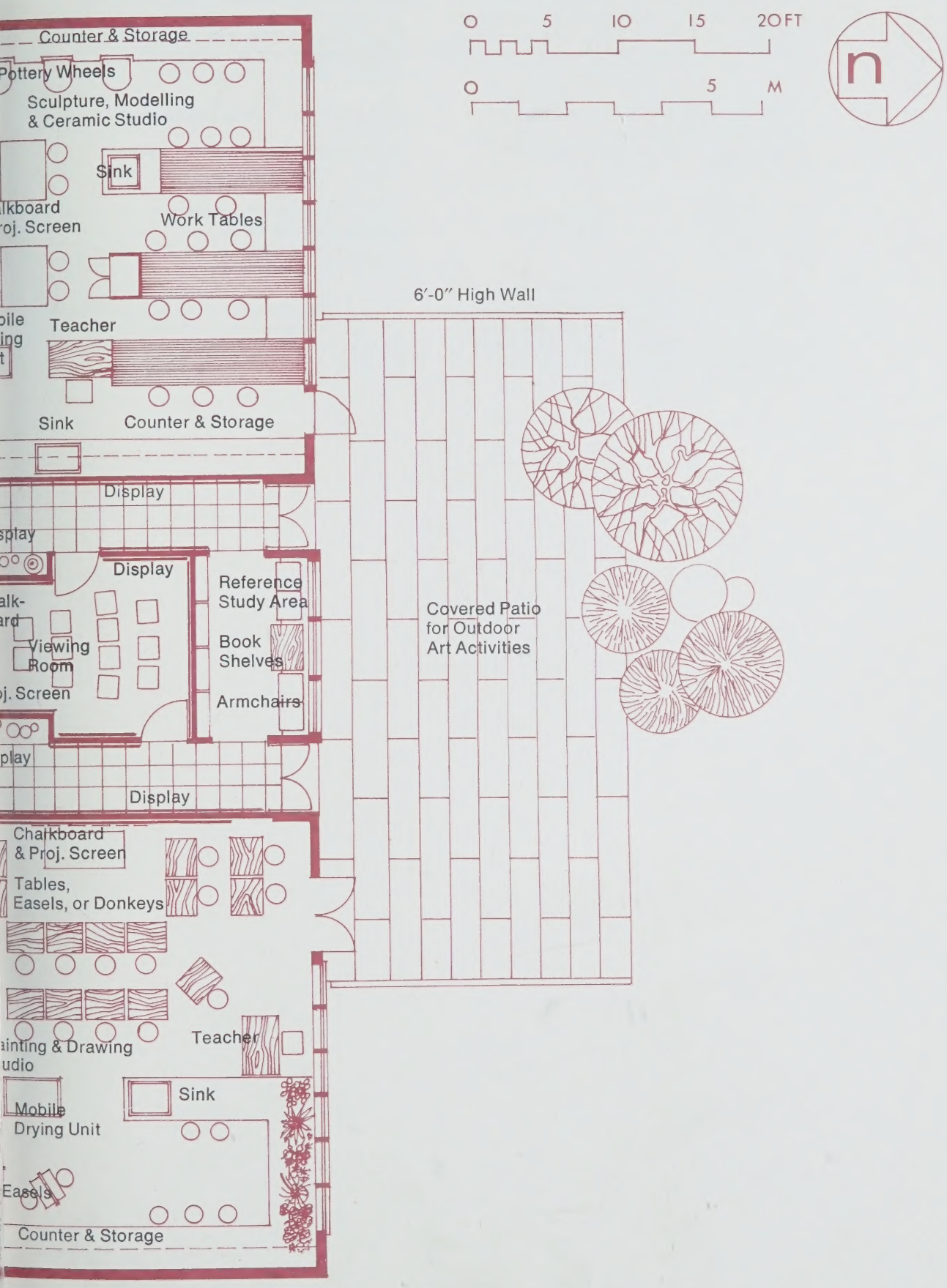
&
Study
ok Shelves
Teachers'
Prep. Room
j. Shelves
Kilns
Exhaust Fan
Over
neral Storage
Chalkboard
& Proj. Screen
Sink
y Bins
Pottery, Modelling &
Carving Activities
tform for
del & Still Life
Bench
Pottery Wheels
Display
Unit
Teacher
Sculpture
Court
Counter &
Storage
Sink
h-level Windows

*** Visual Arts Department for Large Secondary School**



*The inclusion of washroom facilities in the Visual Arts complex should be considered for new buildings only.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Counter & Storage
Pottery Wheels
Sculpture, Modelling
& Ceramic Studio
Sink
Work Tables
Teacher
Sink
Counter & Storage
6′-0″ High Wall
Display
Display
Reference
Study Area
Book
Shelves
Armchairs
Viewing
Room
Covered Patio
for Outdoor
Art Activities
Display
Chalkboard
& Proj. Screen
Tables,
Easels, or Donkeys
Teacher
Sink
Mobile
Drying Unit
Easels
Counter & Storage

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*Books originally published by Ryerson Press are now available from McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 330 Progress Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario.